

# Independent Education Union

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10 March 2026

Senator the Hon Jess Walsh  
Minister for Early Childhood Education & Minister for Youth  
[senator.walsh@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.walsh@aph.gov.au)

Dear Minister Walsh

## **Union members call for stability and sustainability of early childhood education**

The IEU represents teachers and assistants in the early childhood education sector.

In 2024 the UWU, AEU and IEU reached a historic sector-wide multi-employer agreement initially covering more than 50,000 employees in long day care centres and over 500 employers, delivering sector-wide pay increases. These long-overdue pay rises were funded by the Federal Government through the Worker Retention Payment scheme. The success of the program has now expanded to nearly 200,000 employees across more than 10,000 employers who have accessed the Worker Retention Payment to deliver a 15% pay rise. However, the funding for these increases is due to expire in November 2026.

The IEU is calling on the Federal Government to make a permanent commitment to funding further wage increases for workers in long day care services nationwide. The Worker Retention Payment scheme must be extended beyond November 2026.

Early childhood education is an essential service. Since the recent pay increases have been supported by Federal Government funding, wages have been able to rise without increasing costs for families during a period of significant cost-of-living pressure.

The sector-wide multi-employer agreement between unions and employers was made through the Fair Work Commission's supported bargaining process. The agreement now covers more than 500 employers and is due to expire on 30 November this year, with no guarantee that wage rates will be maintained without continued government funding.

Our union is concerned that the pay increases cannot be sustained without ongoing government support. If wages fall after the end of the Worker Retention Payment scheme, we can expect workers to leave the sector in large numbers, worsening the workforce crisis.

We are seeking urgent advice on the Government's position regarding this issue.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Hayes', is written over a white background.

**BRAD HAYES**  
**IEU FEDERAL SECRETARY**

cc: *Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education*